

Soundings

Portobello & Joppa Parish
Church Magazine
September 2023



From the editor



I was on a bus with a small granddaughter the other day when another lady of about my age sat down beside us. “Look,” said little A, “two old grannies sitting together.” Fortunately the other old granny took this in good part and we had a nice chat.

In a time of some terrible news from the world and at home, the minor embarrassments and the inevitable changes that happen in our own small lives don’t seem so bad.

There has been much discussion about the form that our worship will take in the future, and Stewart informs us about the decisions, and the reasons for these, in his letter, with some very sobering statistics about the Church of Scotland. On a more cheerful note, Michelle tells us about the success of this year’s Holiday Club.

You’re invited to attend the Guild’s afternoon tea (£5) on September 11 at 2pm; to hear about our very own Stewart Weaver’s choice of *Desert Island Discs* at the Guild on September 25 at 7pm; and to go to a fundraising concert by Kailyard (also £5) on 9 October at 7pm – with home baking – all of these are on Mondays, with more details later in the magazine.

The Coffee Club starts up again on Monday 4th September at 10am in the main hall and new members are invited along.

And you can find out who in the congregation once tried to get an illicit piece of cake! (She could now go to some of the above events and eat lots of cake.)

Thanks to all contributors – future contributions welcome.

Pam

From the minister



Dear Friends and Neighbours,

In the June edition of the magazine some information and statistics were provided. These suggested that the Church of Scotland is in a rather desperate state: membership continues to fall and the number of ministers is dropping too, especially as a result of retirement. The statistics are cut and pasted below.

PJPC has been working to respond within this challenging context. Several years ago the session (our main decision making body) agreed to examine the manner in which the congregation might speak more effectively into our current cultural context. Surveys were carried out and experiments undertaken. The most substantive experiments included the Rolling Cafe, open from 9.30am until 12.30 on a Sunday morning, and offering three opportunities which reflect different manners of engaging in worship.

The Rolling Cafe has been widely seen as a positive contribution to all that occurs on a Sunday morning. Offering three types of worship opportunities has generated some discussion. There have been concerns about capacity, splitting the congregation and the absence of children at the later, traditional service. There have, however, also been new people attending, joining and getting involved.

Session discussed the way forward on the evening of Monday 21 August. An in-depth paper was provided in order to delineate a myriad of views in favour of three services and the myriad of concerns.

After some discussion, Session voted to return to three services from 3 September 2023. The vote was close and this needs to be acknowledged: 16 for, 10 against and 5 abstentions.

Surveys have been undertaken in the midst of these discussions and in the midst of our experiments. One survey suggested that we in the congregation put great emphasis on warm relationships and that we are able to cultivate these with each other. Another survey clearly indicated a breadth of opinion and preferences when it came to worship. Some obviously appreciate and prefer the three worship opportunities and others think it is misguided.

One member of session eloquently spoke about a core issue: we are a congregation and group of people who collectively are called to worship God. That is unequivocal. Another emphasised that we can and should now work together in order to fulfil our calling as God's people in this place at this time.

The way forward has thus been indicated. The variety of opinions and preferences still needs to be recognised and acknowledged.

What do we do?

We will now undertake to ensure that the worship provision is as meaningful, insightful, inspirational and fulfilling as possible. We will continue to monitor our Sunday mornings in order to improve and progress. We will do our utmost to respond not just to the thoughts and preferences of people in the congregation but to God's calling to us.

'Inclusivity' was one of the main themes that arose in our worship conference on 11 June. Those from the congregation who attended were clear that we should be inclusive as a church. Choices have now been made that are cognisant of this theme.

We as a congregation hope to include those of all ages, those with a history of church involvement and those with none, those with a solid and firm faith alongside those who are searching and struggling.

Inclusive may require at least one more facet. We, each of us individually and as a collective body, should include an awareness of God's calling, Christ's love and the Spirit's restless promptings in all we do, say, think or pray. Paul, concerned about the different opinions in Corinth, penned the beautiful poem on love found in 1 Corinthians 13. The foundation of all that we are and all we strive to be is love. Not saccharine or sweet or romantic or idealised love. But that which is patient, forgiving, understanding, humble, sacrificial.

Let us hope and pray that we proceed, walking humbly with the God who created us, the Christ who liberated us and the Spirit who sustains us. We can't do this alone.

Stewart

Statistics

Here are some statistics that appeared in the Report of the Assembly Trustees of the Church of Scotland, as well as the Supplementary Report of the General Trustees (see links below):

- at Dec. 2022, there were 270,300 members of the CofS, a fall of 4.7% from 2021 (note: the rate of decrease is increasing... this number will only get larger);
- since 2012, the number of members has fallen by 35%;
- membership is approximately half of what it was in 2000;
- 430 professions of faith (compared to 40,000 per year at the peak in the 1930s);
- 60,000 people, out of a total membership of 283,000, worship in person on a Sunday;
- this 60,000 compares to 88,000 pre-Covid;
- most ministers are over 50, and 40-50% could retire in the next 10 years.

The typical congregation looks like this:

- 5 children are associated with the congregation and none receive communion;
- 45 people worship in the church with 5 worshipping online;
- 0 professions of faith;
- 8 funerals, 1 baptism and no weddings;
- 17 elders.

Reports to the General Assembly:

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/general-assembly/2023/reports-and-additional-documents>

Stewart

News from CrossReach

Every gift received by CrossReach is used to enhance and enrich the lives of people in Scotland who are going through tough or troubling times. You can have faith that your money will be spent where it is needed most. For example:

£5 could help fund a week's supply of tea and coffee at one of our counselling centres.

£10 could buy a cooking pot and utensils to use over an outdoor campfire for outdoor learning fun.

£25 could allow a child affected by their parent's substance abuse to take part in activities to build self-esteem and confidence.

£50 could cover the cost of a 1-hour counselling session for someone at rock bottom.

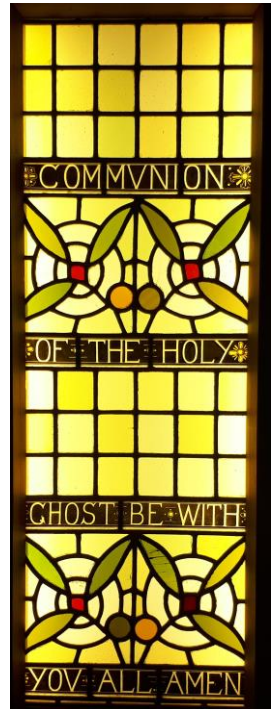
£100 enables a new mum to leave her baby safe with our trained crèche workers while she has counselling.

£500 enables someone in recovery from addiction to access the counselling support they need.



Worship

Sun. 3 Sep.	9.30am 10.30am 11.15am	Quiet and reflective Informal and interactive Traditional
Sun. 10 Sep.	9.30am 10.30am 11.15am	Quiet and reflective Informal and interactive Traditional
Sun. 17 Sep.	9.30am 10.30am 11.15am	Quiet and reflective Informal and interactive with Baptism Traditional
Sun. 24 Sep.	9.30am 10.30am 11.15am	Quiet and reflective Informal and interactive Traditional
Sat. 30 Sep.	3.45pm	Messy Church in Main Hall
Sun. 1 Oct.	9.30am 10.30am 11.15am	Quiet and reflective Informal and interactive Traditional
Sun. 8 Oct.	9.30am 10.30am 11.15am	Quiet and reflective Informal and interactive Traditional



The Guild meets on **Monday 11th September**
at **2pm** for **AFTERNOON TEA. (£5)**
New members will be made very welcome.

On **Monday 25th September** at **7pm** our very own Dr Stewart
Weaver will entertain us with his version of
DESERT ISLAND DISCS!

All welcome!

Look out for the Guild's fund-raising concert by

KAILYARD

on

MONDAY 9TH OCTOBER AT 7 PM IN THE CHURCH

This music group, from South Leith Parish Church,
specialises in popular music from the 70s and 80s.
Gavin Booth, a former elder at St Philip's, is one of the
lead singers. We may even get to join in!

There will be home baking!

Tickets, price £5, will be available from Guild members
after Church or at the door.



Portobello Holiday Club 2023 – Wonder Zone

This July we held our sixth Portobello Holiday Club jointly organised and run by six area churches: Portobello Baptist Church, Portobello and Joppa Parish Church (Church of Scotland), St.

John the Evangelist Catholic Parish, St. Mary Magdalene's Catholic Parish, St Mark's Scottish Episcopal Church and Central's house group in Portobello. From 17 July to 21 July, 81 children and 28 youth helpers filled the halls at Portobello and Joppa Parish Church and the church and garden of St Mark's. Our youth team was the largest youth volunteers team we have had at holiday club, largely made up of young people who were in nursery school during our first holiday club in 2015!

During the week, 48 volunteers took on various roles on the team at different points of the week. We were also supported by 18 additional volunteers who contributed baking and donated plants; helped with planning, administration or registration; planned and prepped our art activities; helped with training; managed our PVGs and safeguarding or helped with set up and clean up. We had an amazing team!

During the week, the children participated in worship, games, breathing space (reflective nature prayer space), arts and crafts, Bible study, a big art project, fun with food, science, and gardening, with a few extra surprises along the way. Our club ran from 9am to 12:45pm and we used the holiday club Bible study material from the Scripture Union curriculum called *Wonder Zone*. Through five Bible stories, the *Wonder Zone* curriculum explored God's wonderful creation and our connection to this world and God. The children encountered stories from both the Old Testament and the New Testament that illustrated the beauty and complexity of God's creation. Working through these stories helped the children pause and explore the wonders of this world and how they are also a wonder: created and loved by God.

Our Memory Verse was: "I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me. Everything you do is marvellous! Of this I have no doubt." Psalm 139:14

As the week closed, the Holiday Club Garden at St Mark's was fully updated for this year's theme with beautiful plants and more about the Bible stories we learned during our week. The Big Art Project was displayed in the Portobello Baptist Church Café windows and will be travelling on display at all the participating churches over the next couple months.

We are already thinking ahead to holiday club 2024 as the children, youth and volunteers have all had such a wonderful time and we are looking forward to doing this again next year.

The planning team would like to thank you so much for helping us provide an ecumenical holiday club in Portobello. This week would not have been possible without your prayers and encouragement! Thank you!

Michelle

Coffee Club

The Coffee Club recommences on Monday 4 September at 10am in the Main Hall. Everyone is welcome for a morning of coffee/tea, and delicious home baking, not to mention time to catch up with all the news of the summer.

We hope to see all members back with us and, of course, any new members who would like to join us.

Pat

Joan



PJPC Book Club –

Report on *Shuggie Bain* – Douglas Stuart



Often when a book gets rave reviews there is a tendency to be a little sceptical about its merits for us, the casual readers.

Shuggie Bain proved to be the exception to the rule and was a book thoroughly enjoyed by most of us. While the content and story line may not have been to everybody's liking, the writing and use of language to conjure up emotions and images of the poverty, hardship and squalor of the times was exceptional.

Shuggie, the son of Agnes, is an unlikely hero and it is his life and that of his alcoholic mother that we follow as the story moves on its journey to its inevitable and more or less predictable ending. However there are twists and turns, glimmers of hope and situations depicting heart wrenching despair.

We had a lively discussion covering topics from alcoholism, the shame of poverty, the hopelessness of unemployment, dereliction of places and characters and the strands of dark humour that run throughout the book.

A book that was described as one that would suck out your very soul, it contained many references to the cultural conflicts of the time, Catholic v Protestant, secret homosexuality, unemployment and male chauvinism.

A 'Marmite' novel, it brought back memories of childhood for some and was described as upsetting yet enjoyable with outstanding writing and brilliant use of language and evidence of acute observation.

Our next read for **Sunday 1 October** is ***A Tale of Two Cities*** by Charles Dickens. Venue to be decided nearer the time.

For November we will read ***Death and the Penguin*** by Andrey Kurkov and for January 2024, ***Small Things like These*** by Claire Keegan.

George

Brain-teaser



It's harvest time, and below you'll find a very familiar parable about farming and the resultant harvest. Can you unscramble the anagrams that have been made of some of the words?

Listen! A **worse** went out to sow. And it happened that as he sowed, some of the seed fell along the **hooptaft**; and the **dribs** came and ate it up. Some fell on **corky** ground, where it had little soil, and it sprouted quickly because it had no depth of earth; but when the sun rose, it was scorched, and as it had no root it **deerwhit** away. Some fell among **hestilts** and the **hestilts** grew up and **hocked** the corn; and it produced no crop. And some of the seed fell into good **silos**, where it came up and grew, and produced a crop; and the **leydi** was thirtyfold, sixtyfold, even a hundredfold.

He added, "If you have **rased** to hear, then hear."

(Mark 4, 3-9, Revised English Version)

Answers – should you need them – below.

Alison



Answers: sower, footpath, birds, rocky, withered, thistles, choked, soil, yield, ears



***Getting to know you* – Janet.**

She says: Hello! My name is Janet and I have been

attending PJPC since 2015. I became a member this year! It took me long enough!



Q. What is a favourite hymn, and why?

A. My favourite hymn is difficult for me to choose as I have so many but this one is probably in my top 5 and it is The Day Thou Gavest. We would sing it at evening services and I would react to it knowing I was safe with the Lord.

Q. What's your earliest memory?

A. My earliest memory is a sad one and I have another which is much better! There was a party at Roseburn Nursery and there were two rooms. In each room we were seated and given a piece of cake. I loved it so much that I escaped into the other room for another piece but was rumbled!!

Q. What is/was your job, and in an alternative life, what job might you have chosen?

A. My previous job was arranging funerals and I was involved in helping bereaved families for 15 years. I am now unemployed and volunteering at St Andrew's and St Georges Church Undercroft Cafe until I find a job I feel is right for me.

Q. What are you reading at the moment?

A. I have started to read a few books – I have several on the go but am not allowing myself enough time to read them! One of them is by Tess Gerritsen and it's called Listen To Me. It's a psychological thriller.

Q. What is your most prized possession?

A. *My most prized possession is my panda bear I received as a small child and she has been with me all of my life!*

Q. Tell us something that not many people know about you.

A. *I like creative writing and poetry.*

Q. What luxury would you take to a desert island?

A. *I would take a puzzle book to keep my brain active and once I'd done the puzzles, use it to keep a fire going!*

Q. What single thing would improve the quality of your life?

A. *The single thing that would improve the quality of my life would be confidence.*

Q. What do you do to relax?

A. *I tend to watch tv or do puzzles. My favourite is jigsaws.*

Q. Where would you go in a time machine and why?

A. *I would go back to my school time and be more assertive towards the bullies.*

Q. How would you like to be remembered?

A. *I would like to be remembered as a good mum, sister and friend.*

Q. What gets you up in the morning (apart from your alarm clock)?

A. *What gets me up in the morning are the sea gulls!! Also actually when it's time to volunteer or when involved with Vocal and Women's Aid.*

Q. Where would you like to be right now?

A. *I would like to be on a ship looking out to sea heading for the Western Isles.*

Q. What makes your heart sing?

A. *What makes my heart sing is when I see my grown-up children.*

Gardening without George!

Don't worry; George is still alive and well and busy with matters horticultural. But his email was hacked a few days ago and he's been unable to send his usual, and much appreciated, gardening thoughts. So I decided to fill the gap with some of the things that I'd advise you *not* to do in your garden. This wisdom has been garnered from bitter experience.



- 1) Never accept plants from friends who say, "Oh, I've got lots of seedlings" – especially if the friends have a large garden and you haven't. You will spend the next thirty years digging these plants out.
- 2) This also applies to various plants that I actually bought, and planted innocently and without due thought because I loved them. For example, lily of the valley – which spreads insidiously through underground roots and blooms fragrantly for – ooh – about four days every year. Probably the next owners will pave the garden over, but this won't inhibit the lily of the valley, which would come up through the tarmac of the A1.
- 3) It's not a good idea to notice, shortly after you move into your house, that your garden walls have a little ivy on them, and then to be too busy for the following 25 years to do much to eradicate it.
- 4) Do not keep a little collection of the labels of plants that you buy. Of course you hope that doing so will help you to remember their botanical names. But in fact you'll have a collection of labels from plants which have vanished without trace. This is very discouraging and makes you realise how much money you've spent on now-dead plants.
- 5) **HOWEVER**, despite all this, gardening is a great joy and lifts the spirits. Just stepping outside into my little paradise makes all the above worthwhile. And George will be back next month. Happy gardening!

Pam

LIFE AND WORK September 2023



‘Scotland was Effectively Ruined’ The 325th anniversary of the Darien Expedition

Letter from the Holy Land The Rev Dr Stewart Gillan reflects on the hope of presence

‘One More Death is One Too Many’ John Gibson and Murdo Macdonald on a Christian understanding of suicide

The New Day The Rev Ruth Halley offers a reflection on her morning run

Beacons of Light The Rt Rev Sally Foster-Fulton challenges readers to ‘be church now’

Enriched by the Glory of God Amy Tanner, Children and Family worker at New Laigh Kirk, Kilmarnock, describes her faith journey

View from the Pulpit The Rev Josh Milton highlights the journey of a newly-united congregation in embracing challenge

Regulars The Rev Roddy Hamilton on worship, The Rev Dr Martin Johnstone on leadership, The Very Rev Albert Bogle on digital church, Reflection by the Rev Dr Richard Frazer, Bible Study by Ruth Harvey

Plus: official updates from the Assembly Trustees and Faith Action Programme, readers’ pictures, news, letters, reviews and puzzles – all for £3.50.

Visit www.lifeandwork.org/subscribe or speak to your church’s Life and Work co-ordinator.

Remembering



- 18 May** Celia Butterworth of Portobello
- 28 May** Jessie Grieg of Portobello
- 13 July** Margaret Calderwood of Portobello
- 7 August** Frances Hamilton of Portobello

Magazine/Diary Deadlines

October 2023	Sunday, 17 th September 2023
November 2023	Sunday, 22 nd October 2023
December 2023/January 2024	Sunday, 19 th November 2023

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www.portyjoppachurch.org

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